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Towards harsh horizons: fear and violence in hyperreality

Since the awful bombings of Guernica, Nanking and Berlin (and we could add Hiroshima, London and Dresden), “we have worked hard to produce a fiction that such destruction will not occur again, in an era of smart bombs, economic sanctions and professional armies. Yet this is nothing more than a convenient fiction, as even smart weapons do damage . . .”

Kirby, A. 2002: Everything is solid, after all. *Cities* 19,1-2. Cit. in Don Mitchell, 2003: Cultural landscapes: just landscapes or landscapes of justice? *Prog Hum Geogr* 2003; 27; 787

Towards harsh horizons: fear and violence in hyperreality

Contrary to past expectations, the world has remained violent, primarily because it's afraid. Used as an instrument, fear defines spaces from which it shapes active or 'eruptive' (Pain, 2008) geographies in a world on the way to hyperrealization.

Developed from the works of Baudrillard (objectification of the world, hyperreality concept), Derrida (performativity) and Maigret (media cultures), this working model (Crozat, 2007a) is different from *virtuality*, a commonplace and anodyne description solely linked to technologies. As a process of abstraction of the world, of societies and of individuals' experiences through artefacts, and as an absolute performativity of narration, hyperreality is a metaphor used literally, an image that no longer makes sense, but *becomes* sense. Hyperreality subjugates the entire process of space creation by severing the direct link between real space and its representation.

The pervasive passage from Disneyfication (Eco, 1985) to Disneylandification (Brunel, 2006), from cinema to theme parks and heritage reconstructions (Rodaway, 1994; Crozat, 2009), from cyberspace (Kitchin, 1998) to virtual reality (McLellan, 1996), and now to politics (Maigret, 2008), creates a world where image takes precedence over reality: in the transformation of tramps into homeless people, of land into reconstituted GIS reality, of countryside into rural landscape etc., hyperreality offers a reality which is more real and more satisfying than the one that gave birth to it.

This imaginary of representation, which simultaneously culminates in and is engulfed by the cartographer's mad project of an ideal coextensivity of map and territory, disappears in the simulation whose operation is

nuclear and genetic, no longer at all specular or discursive. It is all of metaphysics that is lost. No more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concept. No more imaginary coextensivity: it is genetic miniaturization that is the dimension of simulation. The real is produced from miniaturized cells, from matrices, memory banks and command models - and it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times from these. (Baudrillard, 1981:10-11)

The use of these types of hyperreal spaces involves a growing number of tangible spaces which integrate their media exposure as soon as they are produced. Culture becomes media culture (Maigret, 2005; Macé, 2006) in order to build a more *suitable* reality; tourist spaces (eco-museums) or local fetes create a stand-alone parody of the locality they redefine. Hyperreal spaces alter the perspective of interaction, question the meaning of societies' inclusion in space and highlight a worrying socio-political process (Maigret, 2008).

This process of simulation and multiplication of commercially orientated autonomous artefacts generates three levels of violence. Firstly, the broadcasting of brutal scenes by the media: according to a 1995 study, an average of one violent death every 12 minutes was broadcasted on all six French television channels. Secondly, hyperreality acts as a pretext for socio-political regression (Miller, 1997). Abstract worlds in economic models ignore their real social implications: IMF involvement, relocation of online services to countries with low labour costs, removal of public services in the countryside under the pretext of increased Internet availability, use of information technology to increase control over people...

These first two levels are only mentioned here in relation with the third type of violence, consubstantial with the process of hyperrealization: its deep logic favours the disappearance of the world's symbolic dimension (Baudrillard, 1968; Stiegler, 2004), induces a feeling of de-territorialization, a loss of socialised spatial references and a painful identity crisis. For Eco (1987), Disneyland's fantasy order is the opposite of the rest of the world, supposedly *real*, when in fact, the whole of America and the world are the hyperreal simulation. This 'perfect crime' (Baudrillard, 1995) is not abstract: in 2004, two English children were mauled to death by bears in a zoo after having climbed into their cage; brought up on cartoons, they only knew about cuddly teddy bears.

This ill-being accompanies the hegemony of transparency, it influences the social understanding of spaces and determines their layout: through the installation of CCTV systems, the building of *risk-free environments* (Spring, 2004) or the privatisation of public

space (Razac, 1999; Rodriguez, 2005), political decisions destabilise social relationships and the workings of democracy (Davis, 1997; 2006).

This paper asks two questions: how is the production of the localised social issues affected by the generalisation of these violent metaphorized spaces? How can the political dimension that has been removed from the major production process of societies' space be reinstalled? We'll start by examining how the manipulation of events gives people a mediatized experience of the world. Then, from tsunami to climate change, from terrorism to criminality or more personal fears borne out of the instrumentalisation of risk, we'll examine how this violence leads people to internalise fear as a major structuring element of our societies (Beck, 2001): hence, the dream of a world *totally* secured leads to its distancing in order to build a reactionary world which denies the individual and political representation.

The mediatized experience of the world replaces interaction

«... The hyper real is the concept of [...] a simulated [...] geography » (Rodaway, 1994:177): its simulations are not flawed copies of the original, nor of aesthetic illusions, "annihilated by technical perfection" (Baudrillard, 1995: 51); clearer and more complete, they are better than the original:

Technology builds « a magical world. Consider also the way in which modern technology can be employed in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology to personalize an abstract, scientific view of the world, so that it would appear that one can be part of the process of generating spatial relations. (Sack, 1997: 276-22). As the alibi of an authority detached from civic reality, the political decision becomes a technical process that excludes in advance any democratic initiative: by creating a *destiny*, it condemns voluntary actions.

Africa (Shields, 2003:81), leisure spaces (Rodaway, 1994; Crozat, 2005), natural parks (Alessandro-d'Amato, 2008), urban outskirts etc, are only perceived through hyperreal reconstructions. Producers of social virtuality (opinion polls, media) look for *representative*, *de facto* non-standard individuals (heroic fireman, lucky survivor, leaders...). Media stories of disasters or massacres are reduced to meaningless statistics. In the name of transparency, they ignore complex phenomena or day-to-day banality (Aubenas et Benasayag, 1999).

This manufacturing of the world changes people's lives in countries like Botswana, where the only source of public information comes from ideologically oriented TV programmes (environmental issues, sustainable development) (Perrot, 1997). In Namibia and Uganda, indigenous populations have to radically change their lifestyles (Rossi, 2001:59). The government demands it, pressurised by tour operators who sell *environmentally correct* holidays. Climate change, the Amazonian rainforest or the 2005 Indonesian *tsunami* (fig. 1) are instrumentalized in the same way: in 2005, the Mayor of Poussan (in southern France) bought 3000 paper masks in a vain attempt to protect his community against a virus (the human variant of H5N1) which may never come.



Fig. 1: How to instil fear. With the help of a picture of the Pacific Ocean (*La Gazette*), the hyperreal tsunami of Montpellier lead to a simulation exercise by the emergency services. In 2007, a parliamentary report¹ (*Midi Libre*) showed that, on the French Mediterranean coastline, apart from the stretch between Nice and Antibes, the waves wouldn't exceed 60 centimetres ('medium' risk) to one metre ('high' risk), with the potential to occur once a century.

La Gazette de Montpellier, 7/01/2005; *Midi Libre*, 20/01/2007

Thus, the use of hyperreality artificially rebuilds real-life experience and clears away the symbolic. For people, this generates a painful disappropriation of their territory, from body intimacy to the definition of their urbanity.

Death of the symbolic dimension

¹ www.senat.fr/noticerap/2007/r07-117-notice.html

This geography of hyperreal spaces gives an intimate existence to the practised world. It is a sensual (Rodaway, 1994), *in-corporated* (Crang et al., 1999) or incarnated (De Barros, 2003) experience of the world for subjects who have become consumers:

In the Body Art and Performance movements of the 60s and 70s, the body was the instrument of a social or political demand, of a suffered emancipation, the physical and conceptual site of tentative explorations of boundaries (pain, nudity, *gender*, public/private opposition...). Today, the context has changed and the body of art, far from being an inert and indifferent surface, defines itself as a membrane which filters our mutations. Like a mobile interface that reflects relationships (adaptive, osmotic, conflicting...) with the environment. Basically, what changed isn't the body, but the environment. Mediatized, technologized. The context's mutation implies a shifting of borders: media and technology are no longer restricted to capturing and representing the body, they invade it, modify it, mix with organic tissue, and become carriers of subjectivation and hybridation. We left Foucauld behind and switched to Baudrillard. (Quinz, 2003: 187)

Deprived of representation of the subject's unity by genetics, cloning, plastic surgery, digital virtualization devices or networks, the body is no longer central. It becomes a complex in-between identity, an open and changeable structure, a field of interaction between a plurality of dynamics. With the identical reproduction at will and *ad libitum* of the same, the question shifts from 'what is real?' to 'am I real?'

It is impossible to anticipate the potential uses of one's image once available on networks, as "any image held by the network can be indefinitely reused, manipulated, falsified and reshaped without our knowledge" (Quéaud, 1993: 46). The artist Eduardo Kac displays Alba, his genetically modified fluorescent rabbit, and creates unique pets on demand (De Barros, 2003). In *The Eighth Day*, under a glass dome, mice, fish and genetically modified plants initiate the paradigmatic microcosm of a new world, fed by a robot controlled through the Internet. Video games (*The Sims*) and reality TV shows have similar ambitions. "Now, the subject mates with exceptionally powerful automatic devices" (Couchot, 1998:12).

Destabilised, man is acculturated to "the minimal utopia" (Clarke, 2004:167) of a creation without randomness; in the TV show *Okavango*, Nicolas Hulot assumes the right to decide between nature and nurture (Perrot, 1997). He builds a world around a *relevant* detail – i.e. its cinematographic quality: populations depend on their screen representation. Unable to distinguish reality from such simulations, viewers absorb them as an experience. This "schizophrenia in which real-life experience is indiscernible from virtual experience, where all boundaries between the realms of reality and fantasy are obsolete" (Jolivat, 1995: 114) leads to 'Les Antilles à Jonzac' (literally *The Caribbean in Jonzac*, a leisure park in Charente-Maritime, France), or to the *countryside* on a motorway rest area named Ruralie, near Niort (France). The experience of the world is subjected to media exposure according to the logic

of shopping centre developers: why go anywhere else since we sell a more complete reality here? Hyperreality assimilates reality. "Simulation is not an innocent process [...]. It reconfigures the entire social areas according to its own methods of confusion and indistinction that prevent any potential burst of reaction, cloud lucidity, and direct people to a soft consensus" (Gauthier, 2002: 233). The project that aims to make "the afterlife of sensitive appearances" (Mandelbrot) visible reaches *subjectivity*; Alan Turing wanted to create a wholly utopian order (Breton, 1992): the world of the superhuman being that everyone *deserves* to be. This generalisation swamps all mental and collective individuation devices. This "new phase of individuation loss, *linked to a new phase of the history of machines and therefore of technoscience, is also the new phase of a grammatisation process*" (Stiegler, 2004:100, author's italics). In hyperreality, violence rests with the symbolic *misery* of this dispossession.

The relationship with home and places is evolving towards *disorientation* (Jameson, 2007). The technical, visual and economical standardisation of landscapes and the compulsive desire for security create an addiction to technical expertise which confuses culture, town planning, marketing, territory management and public policies and which takes away the responsibility of the population (Sennett, 1991) because it reduces the emotional and ethical aspects of places. The hyperspecialisation of spatial functions leads to relational impoverishment (Lopez Levi, 1999). The enslavement of desire to consumerist logics (Châtelet, 1999; Stiegler, 2004; Clarke, 2004) produces *suburbanites*. Once a culture localised in time and space, the place becomes a generic referent in the centrifugal city spaces (Baudrillard, 1988), an assembly of standardised elements extracted from different timespaces and infinitely duplicated. Event production replaces symbolic systems (Crozat, 2004; 2005). The consumer/(TV) viewer supersedes the inhabitant/citizen and is no longer seen as an informed individual.

This un-realisation of the world through the dehumanisation of the creation process of places generates anxiety, *psychasthenia* (Olalquiaga, 1992): disturbed in their personal relationship with their surroundings, unable to locate their physical boundaries, subjects mistake those physical parameters for the spaces portrayed. They use differentiated spatial identities, escape into fantasy without escaping the illusion of interaction with the world

because the models offered (shopping centres, leisure parks, television, etc.) are valued as a unique reality.

However, Olalquiaga notes the emergence of subversive spaces: some groups distort places with the same tools. Signalling 'ironic radicalism' and the return of politics, the reinvention of such elements as the *latino* culture in Los Angeles (Price, 2000), the Superbarrio character in Mexico City, the Chilean festive punk movement, the French band Mano Negra and cyberworld (video games, cyberpunk (Bell, 2001), electronic art) is a rare revolt (Châtelet, 1998): for most people, this anxiety-based desire generates sadness (Lipovetsky, 2004), euphoria and fear (Missonnier/Lisandre, 2003) as well as a need for security, which forms the basis of a reactionary world.

The utopia of creating a secure world by alienating it

The hyperreal world is secured according to two logics: 1) the contextualisation of risk in socio-spatial systems, *risk-free environment* (Spring, 2004) or *Privatopia* (McKenzie, 1994), and 2) the perfection of design and the totalisation of an orderly world that stifles fantasy; the universe of video games is a gentle and orderly world (Schmoll, 2000:43-44; Shields, 2003:130). The totalitarian utopia of postmetropolitan carceral archipelagos (Soja, 2000) is organised around the ideology of transparency: in 2005, the city of Montpellier's budget for 'citizen management' covered the establishment of a *Maison de la démocratie* (0.3M€) and the expansion of the CCTV surveillance network (1.2M€, i.e. 1.2% of the total investment or 5€ per resident). In the UK, the number of CCTV cameras in public places went from 1 million to 25 million between 1999 and 2007; on average, Londoners are captured 500 times a day on camera, and have no control over the use of the data collected. In Grenoble, the INRIA is working on behaviour analysis software. However, cameras do not prevent terrorist attacks or crime on public roads. Their real aim is to control the population: "The burden of proof is reversed as every citizen is viewed as a potential suspect"². Without any democratic debate, the generalisation of these processes of disciplinary space production reshapes the city (Klauser, 2004): the industrial society has developed into a *risk society*, the society's development stage in which "political utopias have given way to speculation about side effects. Correspondingly, the utopias have turned negative. The structuring of the future is

² Jean-Pierre Manach (Big Brother Awards/Privacy International), *Le Monde*, 5 August 2005

taking place indirectly and unrecognizably in research laboratories and executive suites, not in the parliament or in political parties". (Beck, 1992:123)

Introducing the "ecology of fear" (Davis, 1997) in French suburbs, a Minister politically close to the Far-Right imposed the constructivist image of violence through the instrumentalisation of statistics; when down in the polls, he incited riots which were amplified through their press coverage. When they died down, he instrumentalised them by declaring a state of emergency - anti-democratic by definition - for two months without preventing the start of new riots on 31 December 2005. Nevertheless, this strategy paid off and his popularity moved up sharply in the polls. Thus, "to talk about violence was to encourage it during the riots of 2005, justifying the initial speech which condemned insecurity" (Maigret, 2008:97). Promoted to the rank of 'Hyper-president' of the Republic, "guided by the absorption of what he believes France represents, and inspired by quantitative studies" (Maigret, 2008:46), he established political hyperrealization through a "narrative offered to the media by a ubiquitous and hyperactive President, in accordance with the art of *storytelling*", even if it meant "verging on lying" (Maigret, 2008:100). The universe of media representations having absorbed all human activities, any talk on this subject emanates from it and is therefore biased.

Security and consumption impose Rifkin's new order of cultural capitalism (2000): consciences and bodies are controlled by marketing through the mechanisation of everyday life, and the ideology of communication creates "a cyber-civil social peace" (Châtelet, 1998). The utopian ideal, "transparency of evil" (Baudrillard, 1981), prescribes a society which is *totally* readable: this concept, on which strive all totalitarianisms, leads to coding and list building, fluidity and clarity, encryption and seclusion, alienation, homogenisation and commercialism of desire; the new man has no secret. Shopping centres (Levi, 1999), video surveillance systems of *gated communities* and *cerradas* (Razac, 1999; Mendes, 1997) and dinner dance evenings in suburban France (Crozat, 2004) all aspire to a comprehensive definition of the world when faced with the uncertainty of reality: *privatopia* takes precedence over the public city; we bear witness to a "sinister and homogenous transformation of space. A new type of scheming urbanism is emerging, spread out and hostile to the traditional public space. In such spaces, everything is geared towards absolute

control and the idea of true interaction between citizens has disappeared” (Rodriguez, 2005:128).

The building of a reactionary world

Total clarity and control, a reassuring antidote to fear of the unknown - unsafe by definition -, leads to conservatism. Creative imagination is impossible since hyperreality only reproduces what is already represented (Gauthier, 2002): the conventionality of *Lara Croft* or *The Matrix* does not usher in another subjectivity (Couchot, 2003). Far from metaphysics, this commercial and technological hyperreal ideology only shows a numbing shopkeeper mentality. This project, which aims at building a reactionary world, works on two levels: political and moral.

Firstly, security, surveillance and compartmentalization of societies (Davis, 1997) structure this ideal world of social conflict refusal and create new types of discrimination by negating the other: the hyperreal world is compartmentalized for an ‘elite’ that denies the poor and condemns the homeless to heterotopia (Don Mitchell, 2001:64); the ‘underprivileged’ of Hong-Kong, the ‘economically weak’ of Europe, confined to other economic and leisure channels (council housing, working class bars, Lidl or Aldi supermarkets, etc.), are kept apart from the city whilst the richest have access to online shopping (Metton, 1998). Similarly, the social image presented in ecomuseums denies conflict and glamorizes poverty (Cantau, 2003).

The social involvement of GIS implies a selective access of the population involved (D’Alessandro-Scarpari et al., 2008), often due to cultural or economical inequalities. Some (Pickles, 1995; Hoeschele, 2000) insist on the specific nature of the data used, considered ‘sensitive’ and confidential, derived from an access body restricted to clearly identified populations (members of the security and social support institutions, researchers) whose political and material interests reflect their ability to impose their power and sometimes diverge from those of the populations. The Global Spatial Data and Information User Workshop (GSDIUW) (New York, 2004) points to the growing gap between the increase in the number of uses and the users’ understanding and reinvestment abilities: even we, university specialists, are often surprised to discover unsuspected uses.

This undulatory world integrates changes in public opinion or interest, and is governed by an ideological system (Williams, 1996:67), meta-account through which the cold and naked reality of social power expresses itself (Foucault, 1975:196). To talk of postmodernity no longer makes sense: the old structurations of power are not being challenged; only their implementation is changing. The 'war' to the poor (Don Mitchell, 2001:57) remains the norm, but the terms of social (Soja, 2001:54) or political conflict are evolving: how can we reintroduce the city and learn to handle the hyperreal society?

Indeed, on another level, the project of hyperreal society, morally reactionary, denies the modern, independent and responsible individual: identity dispossession of subjects transformed into consumer zombies and solely defined by their needs (Rodaway, 1995:266), removal of accountability in the handling of images posted on networks, removal of accountability for those who act on those networks. Through their abstract nature and the apparent immunity of anonymity, computer viruses are a type of vandalism that is fostered by hyperreality. More 'inspired' than revolutionary, the prose used by hackers expresses the return of a bogus divinity:

Reality can change before our very eyes, now opened, if we manage to detect in it the hand of a master programmer, of a divine hacker, providing its creatures with the freedom to evolve and to change in accordance with their analysis and their understanding of the 'programme'. [...] behind the appearance of things lies something unsuspected, astonishing, wonderful, laying in wait, hiding, immeasurable. Behind the world, or beyond it, lies another world. (Quéaud, 1993:47)

This is accompanied by the disappearance of contemporary man fascinated by himself (Sloterdijk, 1996), reflecting a will of self-intensification through experimentation that is close to self-annihilation, a culture of self-preservation, growth (cybernetic, *body building*, aging). This tyranny discredits man through psychotic disembodiment: "absent in his uniqueness, whilst being hyper present as a vehicle for driving the world of image, is he still indispensable?" (Gauthier, 2002:54-55). In the realm of virtual communications, choosing one or several network, blog or chat room identities becomes vital "because users have no certainty as to the proclaimed identities of one another, and therefore as to their reality. Listening and talking to someone (or, more precisely, reading and writing to them) works on the assumption that, at the other end of the line, lies somebody you have chosen to accept

for what they claim they are and whom you expect will accept what you are claiming to be" (Schmoll, 2000:44). It marks the end of the universally objectivable individual's identity which gives him his ability - his capacity as a citizen - to interact with his environment, restricted to the interactive illusion offered by hyperreality without entering the public debate which is left to communication specialists. Reverting to an immanent society, the divine, social or political transcendence becomes a consumption-oriented destiny.

This conservative society discredits the very foundations of the modern project (independence and individual responsibility): those hyperreal structures are political and social projects with an antidemocratic logic; they convey blunt ideological underlying propagandas which have become familiar since the pictures of the bombing of Baghdad during the Iraqi wars (Waks, 1994); already, Rambo 3 chose his enemy. Today, extreme right-wing propaganda spreads Huntington's concepts through the medium of hyper-violence in video games (Pilet, 2003).

A soft violence, consubstantial with hyperreality

The fact that virtual spaces are not limited to the Internet justifies the usage of the term 'hyperreality'. The metaphorical nature of this process of world hyperrealization instils a violence that is merciless because it is *soft*. As a banal technical development, virtuality is not dangerous in itself; it is the process of hyperrealization it generates that converts it into a seductive and perverse "final solution" (Doel & Clarke, 1999:272). In that sense, Baudrillard's damning statements or Jameson's pessimistic ones should be taken seriously. The contemporary dictatorship of the simulacrum leads to a loss of space and time references, it suppresses any measurement capable of calibrating senses, it creates closed and poorly interconnected utopian spaces and engenders a feeling of 'delocalization' and confusion amongst individuals: "[...] this latest mutation - postmodern hyperspace - has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to maps its position in a mappable external world." (Jameson, 1991:44).

The three levels of violence described in the introduction are linked, but the worst form of violence strikes at symbolism and culture. The *themscapes* (Rodaway, 1994), *scenes* (Bennett and Peterson, 2004) and other local hyperrealizations undermine the deep-

rootedness that Williams (1996) considered as an antidote to the sweeping standardization condemned by Jameson. Unlike Santos (1997) as well, the remediation of the local, capable of introducing the concept of long time in order to interpret global instantaneity, becomes difficult and threatens the identity of individuals:

Thus, today's challenge is not about loss of memory [...] but about loss of individuation that leads to movements between instances of individuation, of which there have been many throughout the history of mankind, except that the risk of entropy would mean that not only does the instance of individuation move and reorganize itself, but it also collapses, i.e. **the individuation as negentropy weakens as a result of the conflict between the psychic, the collective and the mechanical which seems incapable of being resolved**. The question is about **the reorganization of ownership** through its adjustment to the **new informational instrumentality of knowledge**. In other words, the risk of growing ignorance, rather than knowledge, would be that of an **entropic de-individuation** process through lack of proper ownership of the informational hypomnesic structure. (Stiegler, 2005:9; sections highlighted by the author)

This violence evolves in three phases: 1- Firstly, media exposure creates widespread confusion with commercial intent. 2- This leads to a loss of spatial and cultural references. 3- Loss of cultural identity and disorientation give rise to an overall sense of suffering which is used to impose a highly reactionary and controlling society.

Between the pain caused by the disappearance of the symbolic dimension of the world and the identity confusion, we are "lost in space" (Olalquiaga, 1992). This pain drives masses of consumers/citizens to search for hyperreal territorial roots rendered deceptive by their artificial nature: there have never been so many rural fetes on the fringes of big cities, and they've never attracted so many people...

Some (Doel & Clarke, 1999) temper this pessimism: the generalization of virtuality gives rise to transient binary readings (Bell, 2001). Does simulation create innocent copies tending to reality or a cheap materialization of the refusal of any direct social interaction? The link with representation is not always severed: « Despite the dominant rhetorics of mimesis, there is the potential within the dimension of simulation to argue for the continuing representational nature of virtual geographies; to emphasise that despite some claims made on their behalf, computer mediated communications do not institute a post-symbolic order" (Crang et al., 1999: 6); accessing new experiences of the world helps individuals to acquire new skills (Quéaud, 1993; Lévy, 1998; Hillis, 1999), re-mediatizes and allows for a better understanding of the world: societies' adaptability to a new technical reality, and the development of specific sociabilities change the conditions of social (Soja, 2001:54) or political (Froehling, 1999) conflict.

However, those progressive developments fail to conceal some problematic changes. Indeed, it is the power over space and over societies that populate it which is at stake: social

and political instrumentalisation of ongoing processes through the development of surveillance and social control systems extends mechanisms that first appeared in the 17th century (Elias, 1069; Foucault, 1975).

From virtual realities to real virtualities, hyperreality is no longer a copy or a representation. It is an alternative that operates side by side with reality (Castells, 1998). As an Aristotelian perfection of reality (Doel & Clarke, 1999:268), hyperreality offers an illusion of interaction as a substitute for debate. The will to impose total transparency and perfection, and the inability to reach totalization (Laurel, 1991; Doel & Clarke, 1999:273) threaten the permanence of Derrida's *topolitique* (1996): the organisation of space and time of mourning, the relationship with the Other etc., are no longer thought out; the very essence of the political is at stake. Our senses are being manipulated in order to produce realistic geographical experiences. Combined with the use of an everlasting present, this suppresses any prospect of reference to culture. Here lies the true violence.

«Dites-moi la vérité : nous sommes encore dans le jeu ?»

Last words of French version of *eXistenZ*, David Cronenberg, 1999

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